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Dr. Henry Knight

Savage Desert, American Garden:

Citrus Labels and the Selling of California, 1877-1929

In 1877, a year after the railroad reached Southern California, the first shipment of California oranges left the Los Angeles groves of William Wolfskill, bound for St. Louis, Missouri. The box-ends were branded 'Wolfskill California Oranges', ensuring that the geographical origins of the fruit were emphasised from the very beginning of their exportation to the Midwest and East. During the 1880s, the innovations of irrigation and refrigerated cars combined with new railroads, massive in-migration and land development to turn California into, in Douglas Sackman's words, an 'orange empire'.^[1] By 1900, this empire had surpassed Florida as the United States' leading producer of fruit, while, as one historian explains, 'the orange crop had passed the cash returns from gold' found in California.^[2] From virtually none a few decades earlier, the average American in 1914 ate over 40 oranges per year, and orange juice had become part of the standard American breakfast. By then some thirty thousand railroad carloads—approximately twelve million orange crates—valued at \$20 million, were steaming east from the Golden State each year. Adorning these crates were, in the words of Kevin Starr, 'the inventive labels' whose 'selling of California along with oranges as an image in the national imagination' are the focus of this article.^[3]

The primary goal of the lithographers who produced the labels—and of the California Fruit Growers' Exchange, who employed them to do it—was to sell the fruit to far-off consumers. Naturally, the labels were designed to be eye-catching and attractive, and different methods of achieving this effect evolved over the seventy years the labels were in production. As Gordon T. McClelland and Jay T. Last have explained, naturalistic imagery depicting 'flowers, birds, animals, historical themes, and scenic views' was followed, into the 1920s, by 'an increased emphasis on product advertising', with the orange sold as an important part of a healthy American lifestyle.^[4] This shift makes the labels fascinating sources in the history of advertising, charting the changing nature of the industry. My interest here, however,

lies more in certain consistencies in the images: in particular, how they reflected and shaped popular conceptions of landscape, race and gender in California.

These consistencies, I argue, were three-fold. Firstly, in terms of the production of the labels, which was done almost entirely in printing houses in San Francisco and Los Angeles. While, as John Salkin and Laurie Gordon have noted, label art is usually anonymous, and specific dating of labels can be problematic, California's citrus labels can be attributed, to a large extent, to the California Fruit Growers' Exchange.^[5] The Exchange, a cooperative of growers begun in 1893 which later became *Sunkist*, incorporated, by 1913, sixty per cent of California's massive citrus crop, and 'influence[d] strongly the types of labels its members used'.^[6] As one historian of the Exchange has found, within *Sunkist* 'it was clearly seen that [their] advertising program should feature California rather than the Exchange oranges only'.^[7] The labels became one part of the manifold processes of state promotion, in which railroad companies, land developers, chambers of commerce, regional expositions, and the citrus industry, fashioned a new identity for California, in order to attract settlers, investors and tourists to the West Coast.^[8]

The image of a garden redeemed from the desert was a central component to this selling of California, and, especially, southern California. As a 1902 book of *California Souvenir Views* proclaimed, 'the 'great American desert', of our childhood days...is gradually disappearing from the map, as flourishing orchards and vineyards and gardens spring up where formerly was naught but sand and cactus'. The 'last and heaviest blow at this mythical desert—a desert only because it has lacked water—was the passage of the national irrigation bill, which will transform a large portion of this great expanse into a section of dense and productive population'.^[9] As the writer demonstrated, irrigation played a vital role not only in the development of southern California, but also in how it was promoted. Indeed, throughout the late nineteenth century, as Donald Pisani has shown, growers in California cited irrigation as a key component in their visions of a new society of small family farms, which would displace the large-scale wheat barons and ranchos of the 1860s and 1870s. Irrigation, Pisani writes, was envisaged as a 'tool of social and economic reform, a

tool by which the arid West could be made to conform to the familiar, traditional patterns of land tenure 'back home' [in New England and the Midwest]'.^[10] This approach reflected, also, the fundamental anxieties many Americans held about the western desert, which, in contrast to a 'traditional' American landscape of small farms, appeared disturbingly un-American. Thus, in 1890, travel writer William M. Thayer proclaimed the 'almost incredible progress of the New West' which had 'ever so speedily transformed' the "Great American Desert", a "wilderness and solitary place'...[which had stretched] over its vast territory in painful desolation'.^[11]

California citrus labels contributed to these notions of a transformation from a wilderness into, in Thayer's words, a 'populous and thriving country' by depicting landscapes replete with productive, homely farms. As Starr notes of the labels, 'literally hundreds of these designs, seen daily by millions in the grocery stores of America, involved an idealised California landscape'.^[12] 1920 Santiago Orange Growers Association label *Sweet Treat*, of Orange County, which included a glimpse of an expansive orchard, epitomised how the labels represented an enticement to settlers as well as a poster for fruit: LABEL 1.^[13] Salkin and Gordon have explained why the labels became an important part of state promotion: 'Labels were designed not only to identify the fruit grower's name and location, but to associate his brand with a romantic image of California living. Citrus growers needed more railroad lines, water for irrigation, and consumer recognition, and these developments were contingent upon a steady flow of new settlers to the sparsely populated southern portion of the state. Labels, they reasoned, were a convenient and functional form of publicity.'^[14] The significance of the labels, therefore, lies in the fact that they sold California even as they sold its fruit.

LABEL 1:



This is intimately connected to the second consistency in the label imagery: the depictions of California's landscape. As Sackman has written, the labels frequently showed California as a 'resplendent garden': 'as [consumers] reached for oranges, [they] would see pictures of idyllic, sun-drenched groves beneath purple mountains'.^[15] *Heart's Delight*, a 1920 label selling San Jose apricots of the Richmond Chase Company, typified these images of a farming frontier offering both nature and order: LABEL 2.^[16]

LABEL 2:



Similarly, *Rose Brand Oranges*, a 1910 Redlands Orange Growers Association label, depicted a dozen small farms dotted across a wide landscape of orchards, with large oranges filling in the foreground.^[17] Such visual images, as Sheri Bernstein has argued, 'played an enormous role in shaping popular conceptions of the state'.^[18]

Notably, from 1877 into the 1920s, the label landscapes remained strikingly unchanged, despite the fact that California's actual landscape was drastically transformed by an 'orange empire' dominated by agribusiness. Richard Steven Street, in his epic history of California farm-workers, writes how, by the second decade of the twentieth century, 'the Southern California citrus industry extended through a vast, crescent-shaped, frost-free belt stretching from Santa Barbara through portions of Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernadino, and Riverside counties'. The industry, moreover, combined 'the most advanced marketing techniques [and pioneering] standardized packing procedures' with 'irrigation and pest control practices' and a scientific field department to place itself 'in the forefront of modern corporate agriculture'.^[19] Yet such developments, which underpinned the success of California citrus, found few places in the industry's labels, except for

those like *Flyer* and *Hewes Transcontinental Brand*, which featured railroads surging across the state.[20] Instead, label designers tended to focus on citrus gardens untouched by the 'industrialised' aspects of modern agriculture. As Salkin and Gordon note, 'certain subjects continued to be favourites. Women, Indians, Mexican themes...and orchard scenes were used in large numbers for the entire period'.[21] 'Orchard scenes', in fact, featured in nearly one-in-six of the 210 labels I have examined: these pristine, controlled landscapes boasting small farmhouses and row upon row of blooming citrus trees—as in the labels *Home Brand* and 1930's *Evergreen*, of the Central Lemon Association in Villa Park.[22] The latter image suggested an intimate relationship between California and its fruit by placing enlarged lemons before an inviting lemon grove: LABEL 3.[23]

LABEL 3:



Designed in part to attract settlers to California, such images were, of course, extremely sanitised: they represent not mirrors but edited portraits of the state. In

one sense, their California was mythic, with the realities of agribusiness subsumed in depictions of an agrarian society in which settlers could achieve prosperous independence. Settlers who came to California to engage in citrus growing and 'gentleman farming', Charles F. Lummis boasted in *Land of Sunshine* magazine, 'find it not only the most independent but the most satisfying home-life in the world'.^[24] This 'home-life', promoters suggested, meant the state offered an alternative to an increasingly urban-industrial East Coast. California was cast as a garden which combined modern affluence with anti-modern desires for self-reliance. Settlers in California, it appeared, could have their own home and, with it, a blooming garden, as in *Bungalow* label, which showed a woman relaxing in the front garden of a house: LABEL 4.^[25]

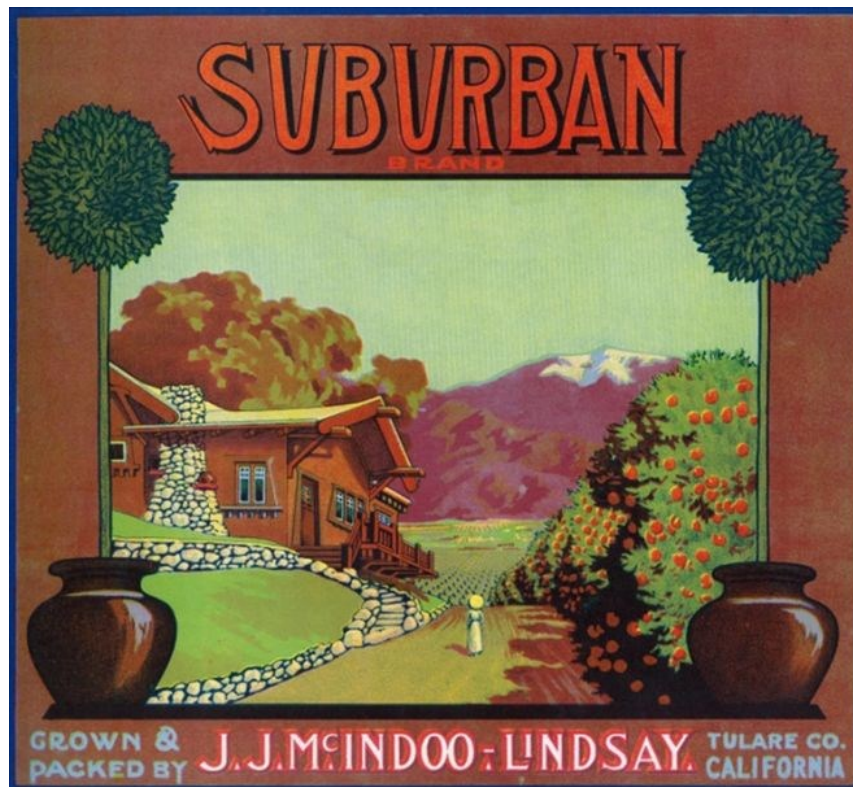
LABEL 4:



This suburban idyll was reproduced in a rural setting in numerous other labels, such as *Valley View*, which depicted a large farmhouse set in a rolling landscape of orchards.^[26] The *Suburban* brand of J. J. McIndoo-Lindsay growers of Tulare County placed a young woman with a parasol walking down a wide driveway between an orange grove and a large bungalow: LABEL 5.^[27] *Sunny Cove*, meanwhile, provided another confluence of modern, spacious farmhouse and

verdant garden: LABEL 6.[28] The path leading between the trees, directly down the centre of the image, implicitly invited the viewer (the consumer) to enter the grove—and, at the same time, to buy into the dominant vision of California's emerging citrus empire.

LABEL 5:



LABEL 6:



But this vision highlights a third major consistency in the labels: the absence of workers. As Don Mitchell has discussed in his study of California agriculture and its representations, *The Lie of the Land*, such images offered ‘a culmination of the American Dream—perhaps not a shining city on a hill, but a prosperous, rural, Jeffersonian...ideal’. Yet ‘a sense of visible work is nearly completely absent in this view’.[29] The landscapes of the labels thus offer a kind of paradox: a tended and productive garden, without any gardeners. The work of harvesting was palpably being done (the citrus fruits within the crates were proof enough of this) yet only two percent of the labels showed field workers actually doing it. Partly because of this, the labels have been dismissed by some scholars as ultra-romantic images, indicative only of the kind of illusory boosterism that later attracted the Joad family to Depression Era California in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*.[30] Historian Gilbert G. Gonzalez, for example, stated that citrus labels are ‘romantic and nostalgic...[but] beneath the appealing veneer is the reality: the citrus industry

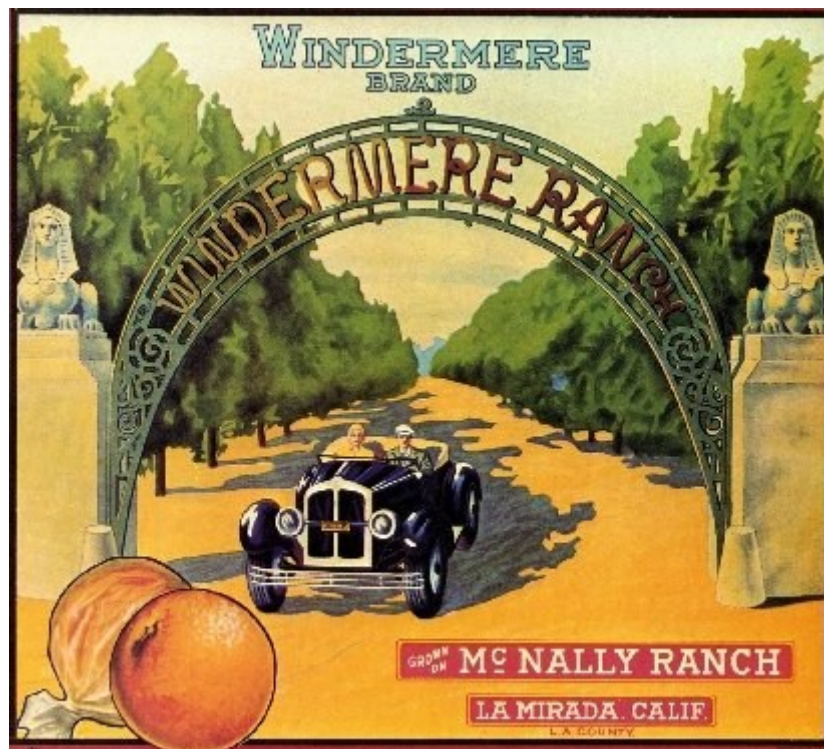
depended on the poorly paid labour of minorities—Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, and women’.[31] Another scholar, writing about Carey McWilliams, argued that McWilliams ‘peeled back the giddy and gaudy orange crate label of official state history’ in his writing on the state’s ‘factories in the fields’.[32]

It is apparent, however, that few scholars have engaged with the images in an analytical way, attempting to evaluate the myths and prejudices which underpinned the ‘picturesque labels [created] for use on the tens of millions of citrus crates...shipped every year’.[33] Notably, what many of these appraisals of the ‘giddy and gaudy’ labels apparently fail to consider is that ethnic and racial minorities, and women, were far from excluded from the labels. On the contrary, ethnic and racial minorities, as well as Spanish mission imagery, featured in nearly one in every five of the labels examined. This is a striking figure given that, as Roland Marchand has found, on a national scale ‘ethnic and racial minorities found virtually no employment in [American] advertisements’ of the time.[34] Native Americans, Latin Americans, and, to a much lesser extent, Asians and African Americans were evidently deemed an acceptable, even desirable, subject for *Sunkist*. But their inclusion did not indicate any underlying celebration of racial heterogeneity or equality in California. Rather, as this paper argues, the labels’ representations of race, gender, and landscape implicitly reinforced the hierarchies which underwrote California’s citrus industry.

Of the industry, labour historian Cletus Daniel writes: ‘Chinese workers (and the Mexican, Filipino, and other non-white labourers who would succeed them in the state’s fields and orchards) were, employers insisted, naturally suited to agricultural work by reason of their relatively small physical stature, ability to tolerate hot weather, native stoicism, and innate lack of ambition.’[35] The latter charge is particularly crucial here. According to nineteenth century thought, articulated by Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 frontier thesis, the Anglo-American, or white, man in the West was enterprising and ambitious, masterful in his encounter with the wilderness. It was ‘to the frontier [that] the American intellect owes its striking characteristics’, including ‘that coarseness and strength combined with acuteness

and inquisitiveness', 'that masterful grasp of material things', 'that restless, nervous energy', and 'that dominant individualism'.^[36] In an extension of this mythology, Anglo-Americans in the labels were shown enjoying their civilised California, as in *Windermere* label of McNally Ranch growers of La Mirada, which depicted a white couple driving an open-air roadster through a sunny grove: LABEL 7.^[37]

LABEL 7:



Non-whites, by contrast, while often perceived as picturesque, were widely considered lazy and inferior, undeserving of the benefits of the garden. A typical point of view was expressed by a travel writer who, in 1900, stated that the Mexican *Californios* were 'too lazy to produce more than just enough for their mere subsistence'.^[38] Thus, in the labels, they were never shown *in* the state's citrus groves—as workers or players. The Mexican *vaqueros* of *San Fernando Rey* label of the Fernando Fruit Growers Association, for instance, rode through a cacti-and palm-filled wilderness, beside the ruins of a mission: LABEL 8.^[39] In romanticising California's Latin past, such labels can be seen as orientalist images, reflecting

Anglo constructions of a 'foreign' other.[40] In that sense, they undoubtedly reveal more about the pride and prejudices of Anglo-Americans in California—the 'veneer' as Gonzalez aptly puts it—than they do about the realities of citrus agriculture in the state. Yet the two, the veneer and the reality, are closely related. The separations based on race which appeared in the images, existed also in an industry predicated on the labour of powerless social groups, typically ethnic and racial minorities, and women. In that sense, the labels represent skewed *exaggerations* of social reality, rather than complete illusions.

LABEL 8:

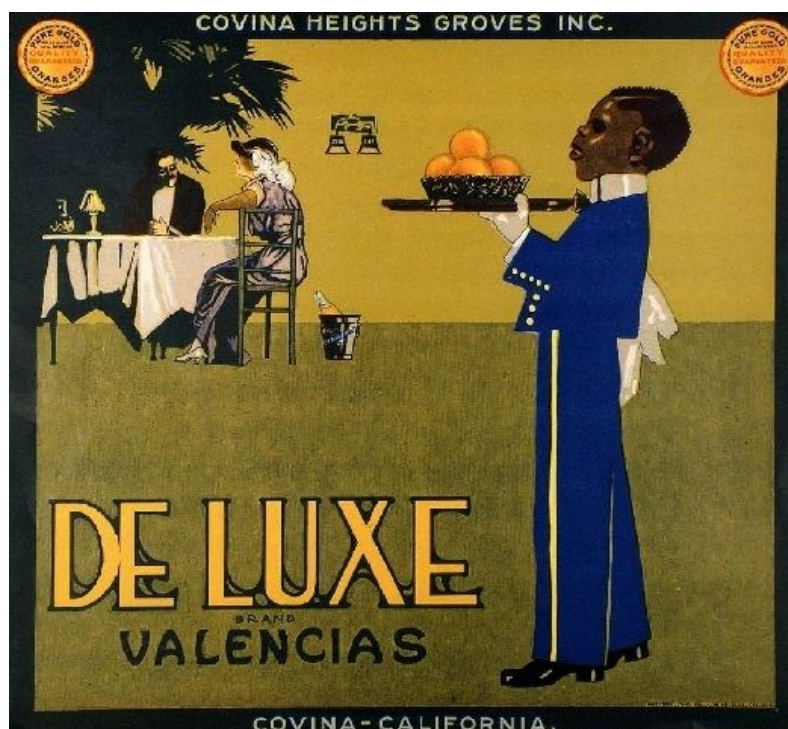


In selling California, the labels sold also the dominant racial ideologies of white America. In some cases, this translated into explicit attempts to designate racial superiority. *Deluxe* was one of the rare labels to feature African Americans. A stylised waiter appeared in the series across the decades, with only the setting and the colour of his uniform changing. In 1918, for Covina Heights Groves Inc., he was serving a white couple in a restaurant: LABEL 9.[41] In 1925, for El Bar-Dor Citrus

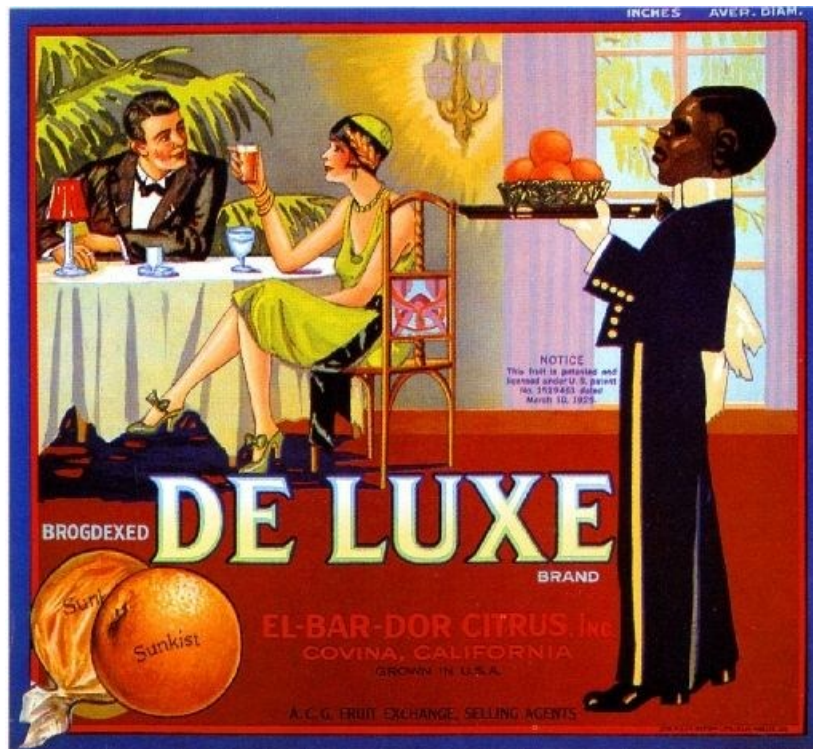
Inc., he was serving a slightly-younger, trendier white couple in a speakeasy: [42] LABEL 10. By 1930, for Valencia Heights Orchards Inc., he stood by the window to a large orchard, still holding a plate of the state's fruit: LABEL 11.[43] While the first two labels highlighted the possibility for healthful leisure for Anglo-Americans in California, the third obliquely linked the produce of the garden behind the glass to a system of docile, non-white servitude. At a time when African Americans struggled to obtain any skilled jobs in California and were subjected to *de facto* segregation in cities like Los Angeles, labels like *Deluxe* would have played their part in reinforcing assumptions about the inferiority and otherness of African Americans.

Even so, the waiter in *Deluxe* was an exception among the labels, in the sense that he was being productive (albeit in a servile capacity). More common were two other figures: the isolated Native American and the Latin American entertainer. Of the former, *Old Crow* label of the Monrovia Mutual Association combined the 'noble savage' imagery with that of the vanishing race.[44] Notably, the old man was placed in the desert; indeed, the exact same figure appeared in another label for the Pacific Packing Company, named after California's Mojave Desert: LABEL 12.[45]

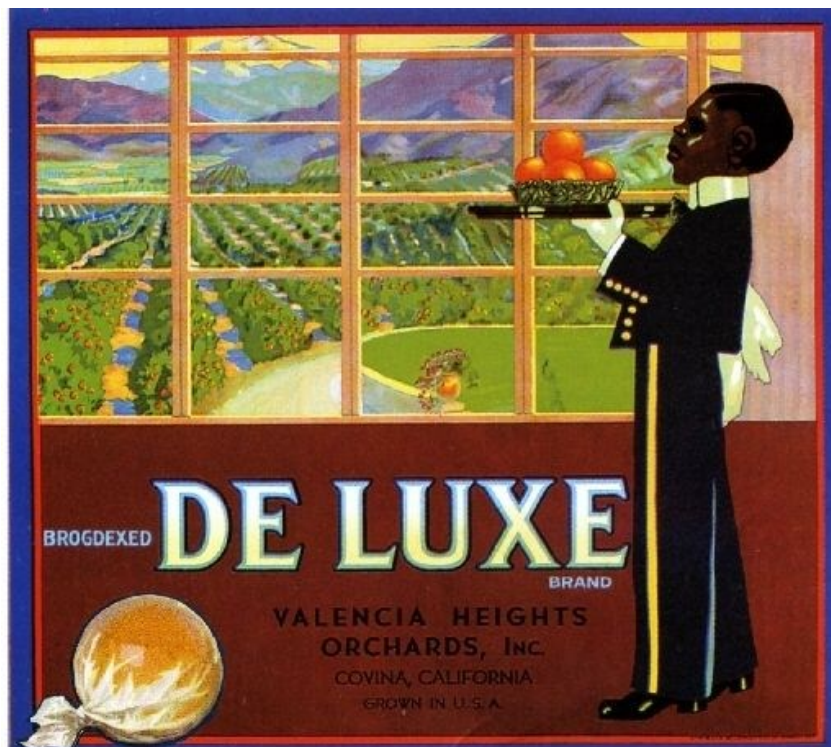
LABEL 9:



LABEL 10:



LABEL 11:



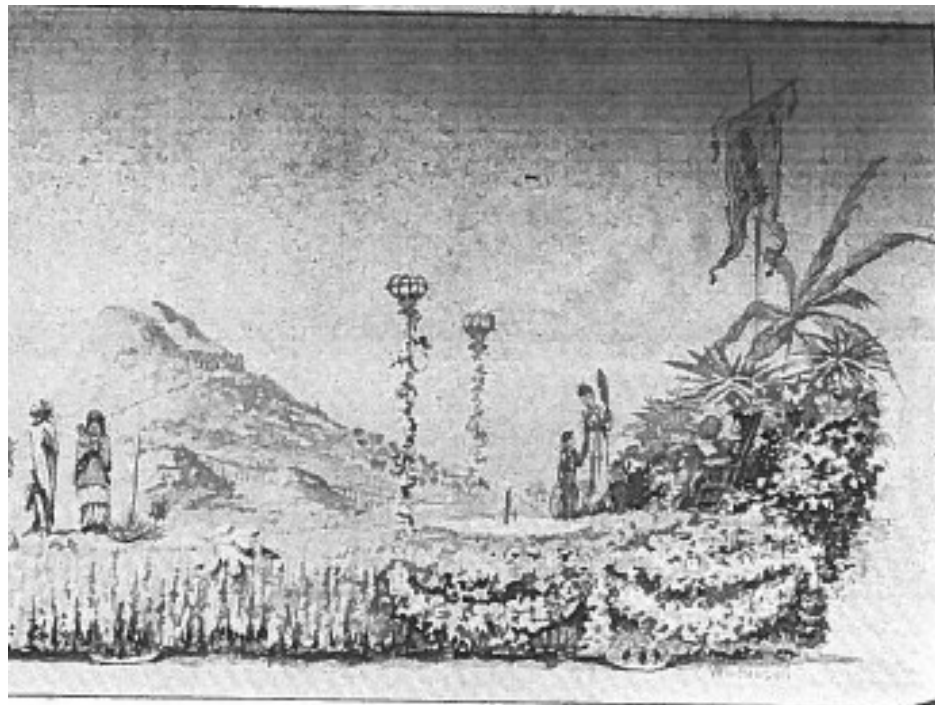
LABEL 12:



Thus, just as growers attributed innate qualities to ethnic and racial minorities in their employ, label designers repeatedly associated non-whites with a separate environment from whites. In numerous cases, the labels featured a division between the citrus grove and the desert—one which reflected Turner’s notion of the frontier being a ‘meeting place between savagery and civilisation’.[46] While white men and women could be seen thriving in the state’s garden, non-whites seemed to inhabit an entirely different, arid California. The division featured explicitly in a cartoon in a promotional pamphlet distributed at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, entitled *Irrigation and Its Results*. Intricately drawn, the cartoon’s landscape was divided down the middle by a lamppost: on the left of which stood a Native American warrior and girl, and a cowboy smoking a cigarette, beside a cactus; on the right, were a white woman and little girl, walking together, and another white woman, fanning herself in a rocking chair. The whites, in a garden flourishing with flowers and trees, relaxed beneath a banner saying ‘Irrigation’: IMAGE 13.[47] The cartoon effectively separated California’s past from its present, with the recent

invention of the lamppost a telling symbol of the schism. The technological and human progress manifest in the state's irrigation, it implied, was the catalyst for civilisation: the 'results' being a gardened landscape enjoyed by Anglo-Americans (notably, women and children), instead of a 'primitive' desert inhabited only by Native Americans and cowboys.

IMAGE 13:



IRRIGATION AND ITS RESULTS.

J. M. M.

This transformation from savage desert to civilised garden can be seen in a selection of the labels. Consider Boydston Bros. grapefruit label *Indian Belle*, which presented, in its foreground, a romantic Old West image: on a rocky outcrop, a Native American warrior holding aloft a maiden: LABEL 14.[48] The couple stared into each other's eyes as if unaware of anything else in the world. Perhaps, then, they were unaware of what had happened to the land behind them. The desert rocks under their feet were dwarfed by what dominated the image and drew the consumer's eye away: the long, inviting (and fixed) rows of a citrus grove. Apart from a few farmhouses visible in the distance, it showed a land devoid of construction: the 'free' land of Turner's

frontier, developed by Anglo-American enterprise into a productive garden. The juxtaposition of the Native Americans with the ordered citrus farm, of 'savagery' with 'civilisation', was repeated in other labels, such as Indian Hill Citrus Union's *Indian Hill* brand, which featured a stereotypical Great Plains warrior standing guard outside an orange grove and homestead: LABEL 15.^[49] The inclusion of Native Americans and other non-whites supported the orientalised California which both exoticised the state's ethnic minorities and endorsed popular notions of Anglo-American Progress.

Turner's conception of social evolution remains significant here. The West, Turner explained in his frontier thesis, was the 'really American' part of America. At the frontier which, Turner noted, officially no longer existed, there had emerged an exceptional and enterprising American. The transformation of 'primitive' wilderness into cultivated farm land reflected a 'progress from savage conditions', part of an evolutionary journey which produced the unique national character.^[50] The significance of this ideology to the selling of California as a socially, and racially, evolved state was unmistakable. As a writer for the promotional magazine *The Californian* stated, 'Here on the bosom of the broad Pacific, the typical pioneer, the explorer, the scientist and the progressive American must stop because they can go no further'.^[51] Yet this culmination of American continental expansion had a Spanish and Mexican past, and the descendants of those periods still lived there. As a result, there developed a schism in the promotional vision, delineating between a romantic but primitive Spanish California of old and a modern, progressive, and white, American state. In the process, Mexicans and Native Americans living in California were effectively stripped of any agency, despite their labour in constructing and harvesting the state's fields.

LABEL 14:

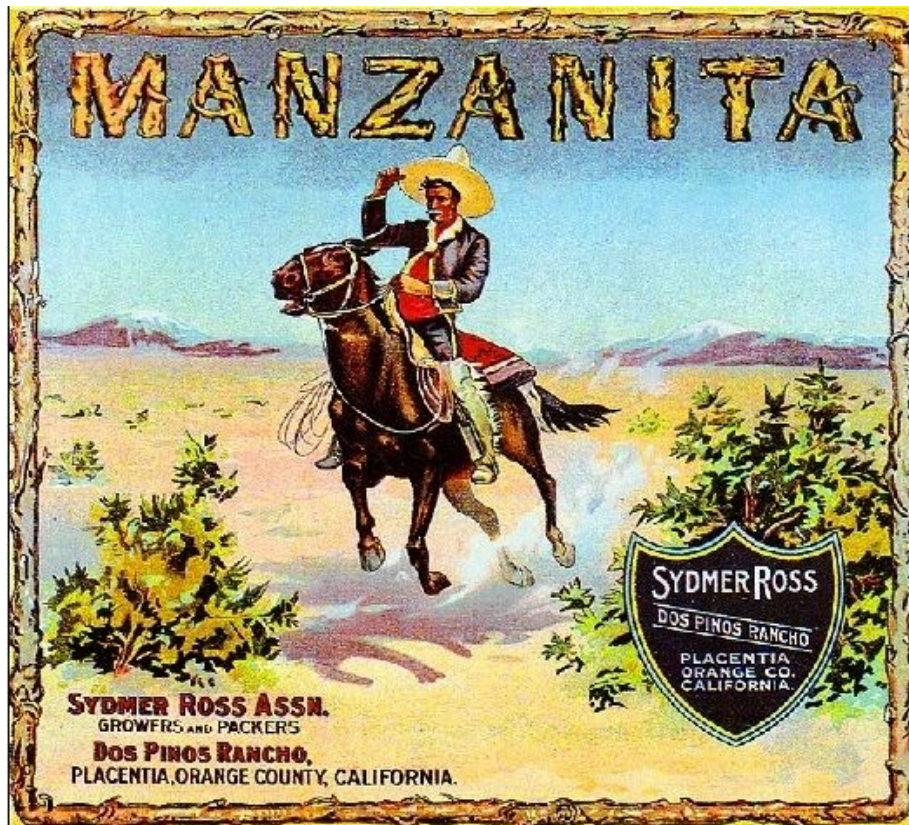


LABEL 15:



The Mexican *vaquero* in the Sydmer Ross Association's *Manzanita* label, for instance, rode through a California landscape devoid of citrus—a desert setting which placed him firmly in the state's 'savage' past: LABEL 16.[52] The inclusion of the desert in such depictions is significant not least because the desert had long been associated with waste and savagery by Americans. In 1846, for example, Edwin Bryant, a Kentucky newspaperman who traveled to California, expressed in his journal the widespread assumption that aridity made the vast prairies of the West uninhabitable for civilised man.[53] Throughout the nineteenth century, in fact, American expansionists looking west shared, in historian Henry Nash Smith's words, the 'prevalent belief that civilisation depended upon agriculture'.[54] The desert, then, could only be inhabited by migratory tribesmen, who, by definition of their nomadic existence, were considered incapable of being integrated into an American society built upon the republican virtues of land ownership. Thus, the Great American Desert, Washington Irving had prophesied in *Astoria*, would become home to 'new and mongrel races...ejected from the bosom of society into the wilderness'.[55] With the efforts of certain travel writers, the image of the Southwestern desert changed somewhat in the early twentieth century. As scholar Anne Farrar Hyde has written, promoters like George Wharton James began selling tourists on the 'strange, wonderful, and beautiful' things the desert offered. Yet, as Hyde notes, 'even with the innumerable descriptions of the impressive beauty and profusion of life in the desert, its reputation as a barren waste did not...fade away'.[56]

LABEL 16:



This reputation gives an added resonance to the selling of California as a transformed American Garden. Railroad promoter Charles Nordhoff, for example, reported his delight in 1882 to find ‘many thousands of acres of land under irrigation, planted to orchards...which land formerly was thought sterile and worthless’.[57] Such opinions were commonplace: as one California orchard owner explained in 1893, ‘but for irrigation much of our best fruit lands necessarily would be still a desert waste’.[58] Placing non-whites in the desert in the labels, then, was to plainly associate them with waste and savagery, with the antitheses of American civilisation. And the alignment of non-white peoples with ‘primitive’ landscape, conscious or not, implicitly reinforced their subservient positions in California society. As Don Mitchell states, ‘landscapes solidify social relations, making them seem natural and enduring’.[59] The ‘natural and enduring’ place for Native Americans and Latin Americans in California, according to the labels, was in the desert, and, thus, the past.

Moreover, the conversion of waste land into fruitful productivity reflected in such beliefs, and in the labels, fitted in neatly with the utilitarian rhetoric which dominated the conservation movement during the Progressive Era. While John Muir, who, as a staunch preservationist, lauded nature in its untouched forms and fought in vain against the flooding of the Hetch Hetchy Valley in northern California by what he called the 'devotees of ravaging commercialism', advocates of utilitarian conservation saw nature as a set of resources to be used prudently and efficiently by man.[60] President Theodore Roosevelt, speaking at a major conference on conservation at the White House in 1908, argued that 'the rise of peoples from savagery to civilisation' had impelled a 'steadily increasing growth of the amount demanded by...man from the actual resources of the country'. Nature could no longer be simply conquered, as it was palpably exhaustible: 'the limit of unsettled land is in sight', he announced, 'and indeed but little land fitted for agriculture now remains unoccupied save what can be reclaimed by irrigation and drainage'. Thus, Roosevelt spoke of the vital importance of the 'class of resources', including soil, forests and waterways, which 'can not only be used in such manner as to leave them undiminished for our children, but can actually be improved by wise use...Everyone knows that a really good farmer leaves his farm more valuable at the end of his life than it was when he first took hold of it...In dealing with soil and its products man can improve on nature by compelling the resources to renew and even reconstruct themselves in such manner as to serve increasingly beneficial uses.'[61]

The ethos of the 'efficient use' brand of conservation, with its ideas of 'renew[ing]' and 'reconstruct[ing]' the land to the benefit of Americans, was invoked by California promoters in their efforts to sell the state. As a magazine writer describing the 1893 California Midwinter Fair wrote, visitors would 'wander along the pleasant pathways of the park, which, but a few years ago, was a wild waste of sand dunes and hillocks clad with scrub-oak' and, in doing so, 'be[come] conscious of the great future possibilities of this Western State'.[62] Furthermore, as Sackman has demonstrated, the citrus grove reclaimed from the desert became, in the hands of state boosters, not only the sight of American progress and fruitful production, but also the setting for healthful activity, amusement and relaxation.[63] The California garden offered an

outdoors lifestyle unavailable in the urbanised East, as enjoyed by the young women riding a train through an orchard in *Limited* label of G. R. Hand & Company: LABEL 17.^[64] Elsewhere, California Citrus Union's *Tropical Queen* depicted a young girl taking pleasure in picking oranges from a tree: LABEL 18.^[65] While, elsewhere, the girl in Collins Fruit Company's *Orchard Queen* label meditated before a vast citrus grove (one of the few labels to show fruit-pickers at work in the orchards): LABEL 19.^[66]

LABEL 17:



LABEL 18:



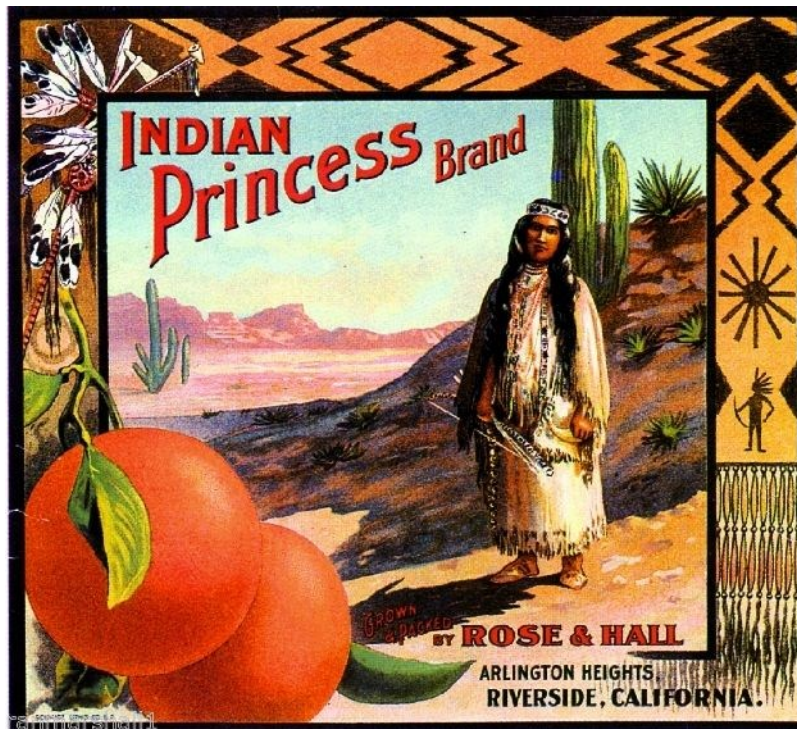
LABEL 19:



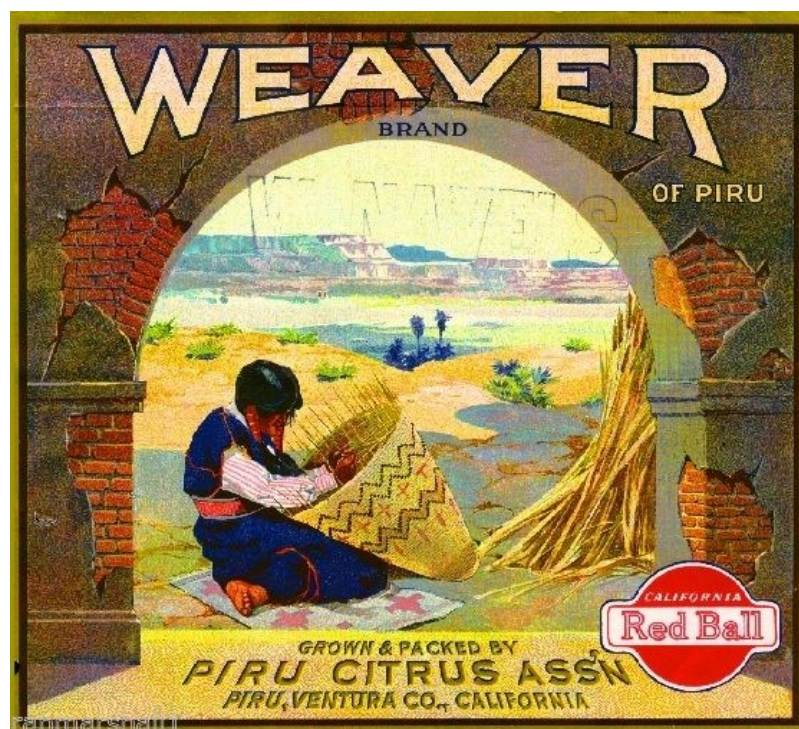
Orchard Queen, in particular, indicated a gendered construction whereby the state's verdant landscape was conjoined with white womanhood—suggested by the words of the writer for the *Californian*, for whom the state was the 'bosom of the Pacific'. The girl in *Orchard Queen* clutched a bough of oranges and flowers to her loins, her healthfulness and youthfulness also, seemingly, fruits of the garden. Such imagery came at a time of mounting nativist fears about the large numbers of southern and eastern Europeans entering the country. Furthermore, a declining birth rate, combined with the expansion of urban living, led to anxieties about the 'over-civilisation' and weakening of a so-called traditional American race.^[67] The labels' depictions of a garden untainted by cities or immigrants, except for enterprising white pioneers, would have sought to assuage such fears. The link between California's natural fecundity and that of its active, healthful womanhood conveyed ideas about the rejuvenation of Anglo-American society. As Charles Dudley Warner espoused of southern California's future, the state would produce not only 'the best fruit in the world' but also 'people as beautiful as their fruit'.^[68]

The depictions of non-white women in the labels, however, contrasted starkly with this fertile imagery. In the former, the desert and the missions of eighteenth century Spanish California became the standard backdrop. Rose & Hall's *Indian Princess* label, for example, had a Native American girl standing beside a cactus in a shadowy desert: LABEL 20.^[69] The vision of a primitive past was even more explicit in the Piru Citrus Association's *Weaver* label, which showed, through a crumbling gateway, a Native American woman weaving a basket in the Painted Desert: LABEL 21.^[70] The Latin woman of the Spence Fruit Company's *Foothill* brand, meanwhile, held aloft an orange while sitting on the walls of a ruined mission, flanked by spiky desert flora: LABEL 22.^[71] Her pose and attire were more exotic than those of the chaste women depicted in *Tropical Queen* and *Orchard Queen*. The figure of the uncivilised Latin woman appeared again in *La Paloma*, which showed a Spanish woman dancing between cacti in the middle of the desert: LABEL 23.^[72]

LABEL 20:



LABEL 21:



LABEL 22:



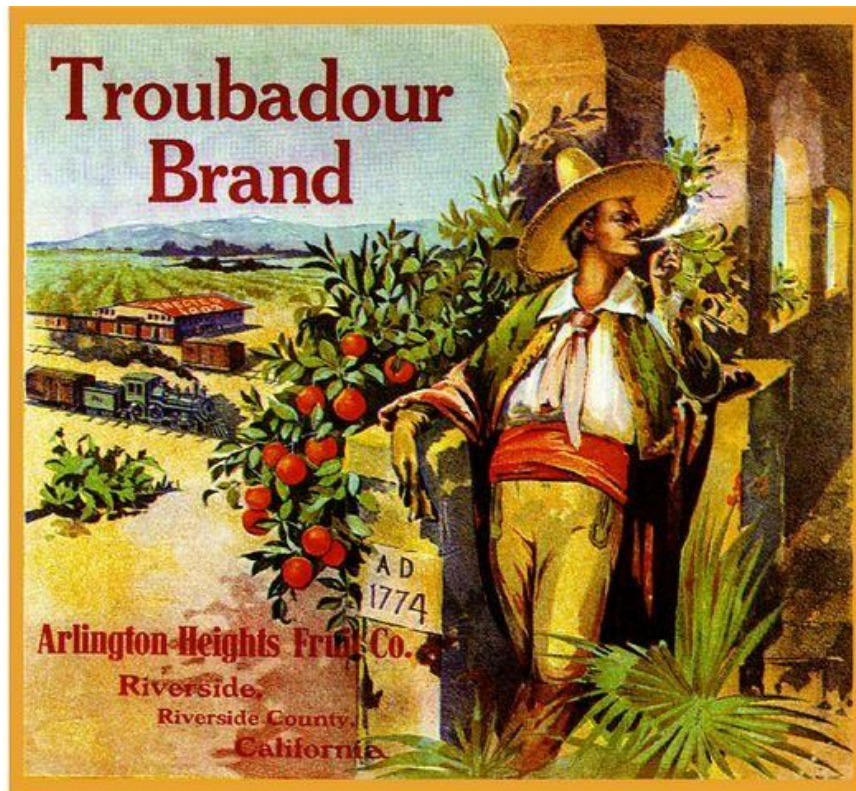
LABEL 23:



This eroticisation of California's Latin women was a prominent undercurrent in state promotion. Describing Santa Barbara's Rose Carnival of 1895, for example, a writer for one promotional magazine promised 'visions of the dark-eyed daughters of sunny Castile, or the sweet señoritas of Southern California, [who] with witchery of glance and gliding grace of movement... dance before your enchanted fancy'.^[73] But, as labels like *La Paloma* attested, such dancing, while alluring, did not belong in the 'civilised' realm of modern California. Instead, the woman was placed in the 'other' setting of the desert. These depictions of Latin women as sensual foreigners enabled promoters to ignore the vital role they played in California's garden. As Gonzales has written, at peak season approximately 27,000 employees laboured in packinghouses across the state, 65% of which were women. For Mexican and other women, it was generally the only employment other than domestic work available to them, and, thus, they performed the arthritic task of packing the fruit into boxes which would be advertised with labels like *La Paloma*.^[74]

Mexican men were also stereotyped in the labels. Though he was not in the desert, the Mexican man in the Arlington Heights Fruit Company's *Troubadour* label stood in the grounds of a Spanish mission with 'A.D. 1774' engraved in its stone: LABEL 24.^[75] Far behind him, a train steamed past an orange grove and packinghouse, leaving plumes of smoke in its wake. The man appeared lazy and uninvolved, smoking leisurely, his pose effeminate, especially contrasted with the brute force and purpose exhibited by the steam engine. Significantly, his head was turned away from the train, while his hand rested on the mission, as if he belonged there, part of the ancient structure: the A.D. 1774 engraving applying to him as much as the building. He was visibly separated from the scene of 'modern' California, symbolised by the railroad and the citrus grove (incidentally, the two industries responsible for the production and dissemination of the label).

LABEL 24:



Such imagery helped to explain away the predominance, by the 1920s, of Mexicans, and other ethnic and racial minorities, as unskilled, landless labourers in California agriculture. Visual representations of ‘the lazy Mexican’, like that in *Troubadour*, segued with long-held notions that an innately unproductive man was unworthy of land ownership and, therefore, deserved the status of migratory labourer. Thus, although explicit representations of non-white labour were avoided in the labels, such images could still implicitly support the racial ideologies evoked by citrus growers. Namely: that what had existed in California *before* the influx of Anglo-Americans and the development of the citrus empire—the Franciscan missions and the pre-irrigation desert—while romantic, were irrevocably primitive and inferior. Disseminating images of Native Americans and Mexicans in ‘unproven’ land became an oblique way for growers to further legitimise their dominance of the state, and of those peoples.

Similarly, California’s citrus garden became a signifier of Anglo-American Progress. The *Tulare County Times* could thus declare in 1890 that irrigation districts bolstered

'the fundamental principle of American civilisation, the sovereignty of the people...The irrigation districts of California will ever be the home of a free, independent, people, true Americans, brave and patriotic in all their instincts'.^[76] In reality, the development of California's citrus empire involved, in Pisani's words, 'the rise of agribusiness' and the 'decline of the family farm ideal': a combination of 'farm mechanisation, the soaring price of land and water, and other trends [which] could not be reversed' meant that, by 1929, California agriculture was dominated by large-scale capitalist growers who employed a growing mass of impoverished migratory labourers.^[77] Unsurprisingly, citrus labels had no place for these realities. Instead, the labels opted for visual celebration of the 'free, independent' society envisaged by proponents of the state as 'American Garden'. The label *Perfection* of the Klink Citrus Association, for example, showed a 'perfected' domain of independent, productive citrus farms: LABEL 25.^[78]

LABEL 25:



The significance of this idealised landscape was evident in a 1914 Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce pamphlet: 'Southern California, the modern Garden of Eden, minus the serpent and blossoming as the rose, was once thought arid and useless desert—was, in fact, part of what was known as the Great American Desert. The transformation has not been wrought through a miracle but by the thought and hard work of California citizens...[who] have...brought water upon dry land ...and now that...their full orange crops are in, their success is attributed to God Almighty. It is due to Him...for God created not only the California country and climate, but the California citizen.'^[79]

Citrus labels, in spite of being 'giddy and gaudy' on first inspection, provide invaluable insight into how such notions of the 'California citizen' whose 'thought and hard work' had transformed the desert into a 'modern Garden of Eden', masked a ruthlessly ethnocentric set of ideas. How, in reality, the people whose labour in the garden made the transformation and prosperity possible (the thousands of migratory farm-workers including ethnic and racial minorities, and women) were devolved of any credit or recognition—and instead placed in a landscape widely considered to be 'arid and useless'.

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